

Balsham Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Most of these stories originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily/Evening/News or the
Cambridgeshire Weekly News, its sister title.

They are supplemented by some articles published in the
Cambridge Independent Press or Cambridge Chronicle

Most were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online at
bit.ly/CambsCollection

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in
touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library
where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since
the 1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2017

1897 07 29

A public meeting was held in Balsham schoolroom to pass the Jubilee accounts and to decide what should be done with the balance of £12.9s.1d. It was proposed to give every cottager in the village 2 cwt of coal during the next winter. Mr Cornell then read a short speech saying the Jubilee was a failure, and the committee were not gentlemen (which was partly true, there being several ladies on the committee). The Rector said he hoped the meeting gave the committee the credit of being honest men and that they would show their thanks for all that had been done for them. This was received with cheers and the meeting ended with loud cheers for the committee

1898 07 09

At the Standing joint committee Mr H.G. Fordham proposed that the appointment of Parish Constables should be discontinued. In 1873 the Cambridgeshire quarter sessions had decided to continue them. That was 28 years ago and he contended that since then they had been rendered unnecessary. There was a considerable amount of friction and expense and they were of no real use except in rare instance. Six parishes in Cambridgeshire made no appointment. In Balsham the parish constable had not done duty for 15 years, and in Weston Colville no duty had been done for 40 years. In seventeen parishes there was no remuneration at all. In others the expenses varied from £10 downwards. The Chief Constable having said a good word for the parish constables expressed a hope that their appointment would be renewed

1899 11 18

Walter Pluck of Balsham said he had an agreement with Alfred Kent of Horseheath to take away the carcasses of any horses which might die. The value of the carcasses differed, the average being 15s. The horses were taken away about two or three hours after death. Some were in a very bad state, and were rotten so he was obliged to put them on the manure heap. He never sent any grease in part payment.

1901 07 23

The villages of Linton and Balsham were en fete on the occasion of the homecoming of the local members of the Suffolk Imperial Yeomanry. Crowds assembled at Linton station some time before the train was due, awaiting the arrival of the battle-stained warriors. The Sawston Brass Band (looking remarkably smart in their new uniform) struck up as soon as the soldiers made their appearance. A procession of carriages, horsemen and lady cyclists, their machines trimmed with flowers accompanied the parade that conveyed the men to Balsham.

190208 14

It would appear from a case of assault that the village of Balsham is not tolerant of strangers in their midst. A couple of shepherds were quietly walking along the road and were unfortunate enough to pass near two Balsham men who were engaged in a wordy war. "Oo's that, Bill? "Dunno". "Then 'eave 'arf a brick at 'is 'ead". The men of Balsham appear to have fallen violently upon the strangers for no other reason than that they were strangers. It might be just as well that peacefully disposed people should in the course of their wanderings in Cambridgeshire keep the incident in mind.

1903 12 17

Three Balsham labourers were seen in a gravel pit adjoining Wratall Farm with a loaded gun, rabbits and nets in their possession. They claimed they had a right to be there. Under the Enclosure award two acres were apportioned for the benefit of the parish but the herbage was reserved to the rector who sub-let it. A gate was to be erected and kept in repair by the rector, but this had not been done so he had forfeited his rights. One of the men was a member of the Parish Council, by whom it had been discussed.

1904 12 10

A party of Macedonian gypsies, apparently coming under the designation of 'undesirables', are being chased from one county to another as vigorously as civilised government will permit. No

county wants them, no county will have them. Hertfordshire police have pushed them on to the Essex police and today the Cambridgeshire police are putting them over the boundary where the same process will be repeated. At Stump Cross Linton police received charge of the forty-old wanderers and obtained horses to drag the alien caravans to Balsham where other police were waiting.

1904 12 12

At Balsham police searched in vain for horses to pull the Macedonian gypsies' caravan and hit upon the expedient of pressing a traction engine into service. So the motley crowd with their caravans and tiny ponies proceeded on their weary way. The idea of being drawn along by a traction engine greatly delighted the wanderers who crowded into their caravans and very contentedly made the journey into Newmarket where they camped for the night on the Heath. The police accompanied the party as far as the Red Lodge where the Suffolk authorities continued with the procession, their intention being to dump the vans on land at Brandon in Norfolk.

1906 08 24

A disastrous fire broke out at Place Farm, Balsham; flames spread to Mr Price's farm opposite and the premises adjoining were quickly demolished. There was panic, as it seemed flames would spread to neighbouring cottages and the road to Balsham was strewn with household furniture. The Queens Head, a thatched public house, caught fire six or seven times and was only saved from destruction with great difficulty. Linton fire fighters worked like Trojans but were hampered by the inadequacy of the water supply 06 08 24

1906 08 25

The disastrous fire at Balsham has claimed another victim. During the blaze the thatched roof of the Queen's Head caught fire several times but was extinguished. However it seems that some sparks found a resting place as without any warning the roof burst into flames and defied all efforts at extinction. The thatch blazed furiously and soon it was burnt to the ground. An attempt was made to save some of the spirits and beer but a good deal was consumed by the flames; a good deal more was consumed by the spectators! 06 08 25

1908 02 07

Linton magistrates heard of a disorder at Chequers, Shudy Camps where some furniture had been removed from the pub and carted away next day. The landlord, who was a single man, had introduced as his housekeeper an unsuitable young single woman. This gave rise to some family difference. There had been frequent quarrels between the landlord and landlady at the Cross Keys, Sawston and the landlord of the Bell at Balsham had not prevented excessive drinking. 08 02 07g

1908 02 07

The Ram beerhouse, Balsham, had existed previous to 1869, justices heard. There was a taproom, bar, kitchen, living-room and grocer's shop as well as four bedrooms. The back staircase and the stable roof was in bad repair. The tenant did a trade of about a dozen barrels of beer and six dozen bottled ale and stout a week. The population was 780 and there were five other fully-licensed pubs and three beer houses including the Five Ales. The licence was temporarily renewed 08 02 07

1908 07 03

A groom had just had a thoroughbred horse shod at Mr Norting's forge on the Balsham Road, Linton and was leaving the shop when his cap was blown off by the strong wind. The horse bolted at full gallop and the rider was thrown, falling on his head. He was picked up unconscious and conveyed on a horsed trolley to Dr Palmer's. The horse was caught by John Mansfield, postman of West Wrating CWN 08 07 03 p8

1908 07 31

Twenty-six licensed houses are to close, magistrates decided. They include the Robin Hood at Litlington, Chesterton Long Reach, Swaffham Prior's Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Three Jolly Watermen in Waterbeach Fen. But the Fox in the Wood at Soham and the Cock at Isleham were

spared after Police Superintendent Winter failed to appear to give evidence. The licence of the Black Horse at Over was renewed after the Star Brewery appealed. also Barrington Boot & Shoe, Bassingbourn Yew Tree, Steeple Morden Lion, Swaffham Prior John Bull, Bottisham Rose & Crown, Cottenham Six Bells, Oakington Lion and Lamb, Stapleford Hammer & Anvil, Swavesey Chequers, Willingham Little Rose, Castle Camps George, Balsham Ram, Linton White Hart, Cambridge Yorkshire Grey, Old Red Lion, Nine Pines, Thatched House, Baker's Arms, Red Lion, Brewery Tap & Carpenters' Arms CWN 08 07 31

1909 01 29

Mr Rose, MP, toured his constituency by motor car and had an enthusiastic welcome from old age pensioners many of whom had their pension books in their hands. At Balsham one old fellow, trembling with gratitude, had just drawn his ten shilling pension. "I remember working all day long for eight shillings a week for my wife and I to live on. Why we be gentlefolk now, picking up ten shillings every week and nothing to do for it", he said. At West Wickham the children stormed the car and would be satisfied with nothing but a ride. CWN 09 01 29

1909 02 05

The George and Dragon beerhouse at Linton should close, justices decided. It was one of 11 licensed houses in the parish which had a population of 1,580. The accommodation consisted of a tap room, bar parlour, sitting room, small shop, cellar, kitchen, wash-house and five bedrooms. The roofing was out of repair and the flooring of the bedrooms and the staircase weak. The trade was about a barrel of beer and stout a week. The Three Horseshoes, Duxford was one of six in the village and there were more licenced houses in Balsham than were required, so the Five Bells should also close CWN 09 02 05

1909 07 02

A number of village public houses are no longer economic and should close, magistrates were told. They included the Bell at Meldreth, Melbourn's Old Elm Tree, The Royal Oak Fulbourn, The Lamb and Lord Nelson at Cottenham, British Queen Chesterton, Queen's Head Dry Drayton, Over's Hare and Hounds, Balsham Five Awls and Soham's Fox-in-Wood. But the licensee of the Green Man at Swavesey said he did not want to leave it. CWN 09 07 02

1909 09 03

There was a serious fire in Back Lane, Balsham, when two cottages belonging to Mr Cornell were burnt down. Someone was trying to burn out a wasps' nest in the house-thatch which caught fire. There are some 20 cottages close together in Back Lane but P.C. Lovett and others directed their efforts to prevent the fire spreading. At Barley a young man was arrested for setting light to a hay stack near Broadmore Pond. CEN 09 09 03

1910 02 25

On arriving by rail at Linton station the traveller has a pleasant drive of six miles to Balsham, a secluded old-world village where Time seems to pass with slow and reverent step, as if it is half-fearful of disturbing the sweet repose of that quaint archaic place. The square Norman tower of the old church rises grim and grey from amidst luxuriant foliage while the stately granite-built rectory stands in spacious grounds and the well-kept lawn slopes gradually down through a fairyland of flowers to a sylvan scene of much beauty. 10 02 25i

1911 04 14

The condition of houses in the Linton Rural District is fairly good but several old dilapidated cottages have been pulled down and others need attention. About 64 new properties have been built by private enterprise and the first ten houses in the county to be erected under the Housing and Town Planning Act will be built at Linton. Each will have three bedrooms, parlour, living room and scullery with coal shed and earth closet. Others may be erected in Whittlesford and Balsham 11 04 14a

1912 01 12

The head teacher of Balsham School appealed against her dismissal. When she took charge of the school it was in too bad a state for any certified master to tackle. But Managers felt the school needed strengthening and that a master should be appointed. It was difficult to judge the work of the children because the syllabus, except for arithmetic, was so vague as to be of little value. Discipline was not satisfactory: there was a lot of talking and corporal punishment was by no means rare, there having been 38 cases since Christmas. 12 01 12b

1912 03 22

A quiet wedding was solemnised in St George's Church, Penang, between Mr W. Leslie Wood, Superintendent Government Plantations, Perak, Federated Malay States, formerly of Balsham, and Miss Edith Cooper of Teddington. The staff on the Hill Station and caretakers of the Government Sanatoria Bungalows, over which Mr Wood has control, presented the bride with a gold chain necklace with pendants of amethysts and pearls. A luncheon was held on the cool verandah of the Runnymede Hotel, adjoining the sea. 12 03 22e

1912 07 12

Balsham feast thrives – 12 07 12k

1912 11 15

Balsham's new Church Institute fills a long-felt want. It consists of a single large hall attached to which is a small kitchen and the former parish room removed from its old position. The walls have been pink washed with high wainscoting of olive green. Besides socials and concerts it will be used as a men's club, for classes in cookery and laundry work, Red Cross lectures and other functions. There have been few days on which it has not been used. The parish was not rich but people who did not live there had put their shoulders to the wheel 12 11 15c

1913 04 04

Congregational union – villages, Burwell, Castle Camps, Chatteris, Eversden, Fordham, Whittlesey, Balsham, West Wrating. Cheveley, Shelford, Six Mile Bottom *

1913 05 11

Balsham feast

1913 08 22

Great Chesterford Brewery comprising the steam brewery, two maltings and seven licensed houses were sold by auction. Lots included the Plough at Birdbrook, the Five Bells in Saffron Walden, the King William IV beerhouse and Queen's Head Inn, Balsham, Comberton's Tailors Arms with cottage, which fetched £730 and the Plough beerhouse in Chesterford. The Brewery itself with a malting beerhouse raised £2,700 with the plant to be paid by valuation.

1913 10 24

Balsham cross and litany desk dedicated

1916 06 14

Scout Medal. Scout Frank Keepin, Patrol Leader, Balsham, was recently awarded a medal of merit for gallantry in stopping a pair-horse wagon on the A.S.C., which was dashing unattended down the street, several children being in the way. The medal was presented at a meeting of the Cambridge Association by Professor Stanley Gardiner, District Commissioner.

1916 10 11

1st Balsham VAD Hospital closed following adverse report from Surgeon-General; have been 250 patients – 16 10 11g

1918 05 29

Farm Fire at Balsham - a fire which did considerable damage, broke out on a farm belonging to Mr Purkiss and tenanted by Miss Archer on Wednesday evening. Happening to glance out of his window about 11.30 p.m., Mr. Samworth, a smallholder, noticed that a large barn was on fire. He gave the alarm and police from the villages round about were quickly on the scene, but there was, unfortunately, no fire engine to be had, and attempts to extinguish the flames with pails of water were futile. The flames quickly spread until they involved Mr. Samworth's cottage, two loose boxes a cart shed and a granary and pigsties. Half the pigsties were cut down, leaving a wide gap and this prevented the flames from making further progress. Mr. Samworth's cottage was burnt to the ground, and a considerable amount of machinery was destroyed. All the livestock were fortunately saved. It was not until after two o'clock in the morning that the fire had practically burnt itself out but the ruins smouldered all day. We understand that the property damaged was covered by insurance. – 18 05 29d

1919 06 19

Big gathering of mothers – About 400 members of the Mothers Union in the Camps Rural Deanery assembled at Balsham Rectory. They hailed from Whittlesford, Sawston, Pampisford, Ickleton, Duxford, Castle Camps, Horseheath, Linton, Bartlow and Balsham. They partook of tea, and were addressed by the Bishop of Ely and Mrs. Eager, from the Central Mothers' Union, London. – photo – 19 06 18c

1920 01 07

Rats killed. Up to December 3rd last the number of rats killed in the county and paid for by Cambs County Council under the Rats Order, was 35,516. The districts concerned were: Little Abington (number of rats killed 504), Ashley (980), Balsham (2,718), Borough Green (358), Bottisham (999), Cheveley (631). Chippenham (838), Great Chishill (322), Croxton (225), Dullingham (1,205), Duxford (754), Elsworth (39), Fordham (8,072), Fowlmere (489), Harston (322), Hauxton (186). Heydon (1,593), Hildersham (236). Horseheath (324), Ickleton (1,095), Isleham (3,809), Kennett (1,422). Kirtling (396), Kneeworth (549), Linton (584), Lode (548), Melbourn (442), Newton (160), Pampisford (429), Sawston (332), Shepreth (313). Shudy Camps (1,38), Snailwell (786), Soham (2,896), Stetchworth (1,105) Swaffham Prior (1,032), Thriplow (464), Waterbeach (967), West Wickham (995), Whittlesford (324), Great Wilbraham (846), Wood Ditton (2,017).

1921 03 30

Balsham war memorial unveiled – 21 03 30a

1924 10 29

At Fulbourn a considerable increase in the number of early voters was reported. Capt Briscoe's colours and motors were well in evidence. At Balsham a cluster of children displayed scraps of red ribbons and shouted, "Vote for Garratt". A tramp was seen addressing a road sweeper near Abington and urging, with all the persuasion of his kind, the necessity for England to return a Labour government. In the course of his oratorical effort the 'gentleman of the road' beat the air with a bag containing his worldly possessions. Shelford and Stapleford as usual made a great show of the pink and white but near the centre of the village a red flag was conspicuously displayed by the roadside – on a tar burner

1925 02 20

Linton RDC heard that the village most in need of cottages as Balsham – which was really in a sad plight. Under the Addison Act the council had chosen a building site there, but the purchase was never completed, partly owing to the cost. They had now been able to get the promise of two really good sites to be given to the council and they would be able to build six cottages at a rent of 4s. (20p) a week

1925 09 03

Linton Rural District Council congratulated themselves on the latest movement in their house building campaign. Houses are to be built at Balsham at £400 or less apiece – assuming free sites can be obtained. On these conditions rents of 4s 6d a week are to be charged and the cost to the rates is only a farthing in the £. They were also likely to be able to build houses at West Wickham and Carlton and there were vacant sites at Sawston & Hildersham. The Government would give £12.10s a year for 40 years for every cottage built.

1927 11 23

The Cambridge Photographic Club exhibition contained 120 entries made in connection with the scheme for providing photographic records of objects of interest in the county, most of them thatched cottages which are not unlikely to disappear. Whittlesford, Balsham and Toft provided the largest numbers, these being villages to which excursions were organised during the summer months.

1927 12 14

The new font cover of Balsham church is the work of the Rector, Canon H. Burrell and has taken eight years to build. It is a magnificent structure, reaching about thirty feet from the ground, and hangs from the roof. It is a telescopic: the upper portion is suspended as a permanent canopy over the font and the lower part, which acts as the lid, is hung to it by a system of steel wire ropes and pulleys. For the balance weight a 9.4 naval shell has been used.

1928 03 24

The Women's Institutes Home Crafts Exhibition at the Guildhall features a display of the rooms of village homes, the furniture and other smaller articles of which had been made by the villagers themselves. A sitting room had been made by Balsham members, including a carved sideboard, tables and chairs, a settee made out of boxes and cushions, and a screen made by 23 men. The Barton group showed a bedroom with a wash-hand-stand with marble top. Even the soap was home made and a pair of candlesticks were made of cotton-reels.

1929 05 02

Balsham water scheme – CDN 2.5.1929

1931 03 27

The well at Balsham is in a dangerous condition; the chalk blocks at the top will have to be removed to a depth of five feet and the well lined with brickwork, with more repairs 51 feet down. Before this can be carried out the whole of the chalk lining needs to be secured by bolts from the surface. The council discussed final details of the village water scheme but rejected a proposal to include fire hydrants in case of fire. 31 03 27k

1931 10 02

Mr C.B. Long of West Wrating reapplied for a bus service to the Thurlows and Cambridge. Last year it ran four days a week and carried 2,000 single and 9,000 return passengers. Now he wanted a new service from Balsham to Newmarket. Messrs Saberton and Young ran a bus from Little Downham to Ely; it had started 2½ years ago and carried 100 passengers a day. Sometimes they ran a private car to take additional passengers. 31 10 02k & 1

1933 07 05

A fight over a girl at Balsham fair ended up in court. One lad said he went to the fair, had one drink, and then gone on a roundabout several times with a young lady. As they walked away, talking, another lad came up and spoke to the girl, then hit him the eye, breaking his spectacles. The second lad said he had been 'walking out' with her for 18 months. They were both fined ten shillings 33 07 05 p5

1934 02 15

Coffin in crash near Balsham, undertaker summoned – 34 02 15

1934 09 07

Canon Burrell, Balsham wood carver – 34 09 07

1937 08 31

The premise behind the military manoeuvres was that production of a new lethal gas was about to start in two underground factories at Yole and Barsey Farm near Balsham and Shudy Camps. Different essentials of the gas were to be made at each factory so destruction of either would prevent production. There was a large influx of visitors to the church parade at Shudy Camps Park where 400 men from various regiments had assembled for the training exercise. Afterwards a band concert was greatly enjoyed. 37 08 31

1937 10 20

The Bishop of Ely says money is needed for building new churches in rapidly developing centres of population, such as St George's off Milton Road, Cambridge, and the maintenance of church schools. But many old buildings are in serious structural difficulties due to subsidence or dry rot. Some such as Upwood and Croydon are already 'hospital cases'. Inhabitants of Balsham, Caldecote, Benwick and Carlton do their best but are unable to meet the expenditure necessary to put their churches into repair. Soon an Appeal Fund will be launched. 37 10 20e

1938 01 29

Henry Brunning of Great Shelford was a blacksmith for 55 years being kicked by horses many times. He did an apprenticeship at Barrington, then joined Alec Redhouse's firm of engineers and general smiths at Balsham. He later worked at forges at Linton, Shelford and Stapleford. He remembers when all travelling had to be done by walking or carrier carts and there were more penny-farthing cycles than anything else. During the Great War he worked in a munitions factory at Trumpington. He treasures a box of six spoons sent by his daughter who served in France as a nurse; each carries the name of a battlefield on which she'd served. 38 01 29

1938 06 07

One of Balsham's oldest inhabitants, Suzan Chambers, figured in a fire drama when the picturesque cottage she had lived in for 89 years was completely destroyed together with the one alongside. Firemen concentrated on saving other thatched buildings and had to damp down the old Tythe barn attached to the Rectory to prevent it being damaged. So rapidly did the flames spread there was no time for salvaging more than a few trinkets and a couple of chairs. Mrs Chambers' parents, grandparents and great-grandparents had lived in the same cottage – 38 06 07, 38 06 08

1939 08 04

Owing to a misunderstanding, a fire at a cottage-cum-general-stores in Balsham High Street was raging for forty-five minutes before the Fire Brigade was notified. But they managed to save a semi-detached cottage. The blaze broke out in an out-house and destroyed all but a front room and bedroom; a garage at the back was razed to the ground. Although most of the property perished, a tin containing money collected for Addenbrooke's Hospital was found to be intact after the fire – 39 08 04 & b

1943 11 05

55 Years Married. — On Sunday, Mr. and Mrs. M. H. Spencer, of The Brambles, Balsham celebrated the 55th anniversary of their wedding. They were married at Attleborough, Norfolk, on October 31, 1888. Mr. Spencer, who was born at Sprowston, Norwich, on May 10, 1859, was for some years head gardener at Six Mile Bottom Hall. Mrs. Spencer, who was born at Mettingham, Suffolk celebrated her 86th birthday on November 3. They have resided at Balsham for about 18 years.

1947 05 27

A penny-farthing earned some thousands per cent interest at an Empire Day fete held by the Balsham Conservative and Unionist Association in the Park, Balsham, on Saturday. But this penny-farthing was nothing so ordinary as a sum of money. It was an example of the cycle of that name and it earned the interest by people paying to ride on it. It was a "star" attraction in an event full of

attraction. Other items were a fancy-dress competition, a baby show, a goat show, and a Punch & Judy show

1950 08 25

A minor ‘whirlwind’ hit Balsham yesterday afternoon. A farmer said he was sheltering beside a pile of beans at the time. “The ton of straw I had placed on it as a temporary protection was whisked off in no time”, he said

1952 01 22

Cambridgeshire is the only county in the Eastern region, apart from the Isle of Ely, that has not opened an Old People’s Home, said Councillor Miss Boake when she urged that the adaptation of Willingham Rectory as a home be given priority. The cost would be £9,851, including £3,500 purchase price. The Isle was now building a home, while Huntingdon had three. Coun Randall said there would sooner or later have to be a sewerage scheme in Balsham; there were four open drains taking sewage at the moment. Premier Travel has offered a withdrawn, but serviceable motor coach for use as a mobile cinema to enable the Road Safety Organiser to expand his activities.

1953 09 21

The Matchless Motor Cycle Club brought their scramble season to a close with a meeting at Balsham. International riders were in every event in which the experts were not barred, the course was in fine condition and the largest crowd ever to attend a scramble meeting in the district were entertained with a display of riding which produced thrill after thrill. Brian Stonebridge was enthusiastically cheered as he completed the final circuit of the “Devil take the hindmost” – the final event

1954 02 03

A stained glass window was dedicated at Balsham parish church to the memory of the late Canon H.J.E. Burrell who was rector for 24 years, his mother and sister. Ordained in 1890 he came to the village in 1910 and retired to Cambridge in 1934. He had a great knowledge of architecture and was a talented wood carver who spent eight years working on a superbly carved font cover for the church.

1957 08 08

An old Balsham bakehouse with its oven, which has stood for 50 years at the entrance to the Bell Inn yard and used to provide the whole village with bread, has been demolished. . Some villagers who have very sentimental memories of it and organised a ‘save the oven campaign. Mr Arthur Gray, who lived at the Bell until 1935, used the oven, built by his father, until he built a more modern one elsewhere. It used to be heated by a furnace at the side until it was hot enough to put in the bread.
57 08 08

1957 08 30

Arthur Rayner of Balsham was one of the workmen who helped when the beautiful carved font cover in the village church was installed by Kidman and Son about 30 years ago. It is the work of a former Rector, Canon H. Burrell who taught some of the parishioners wood-working. Now it is carefully cleaned by the present rector’s wife – by vacuum cleaner. 57 08 30

1959 04 04

Jack McVitie of Bermondsey was one of four men convicted of possessing gelatine and of carrying a flick knife. Their Ford Zephyr car was stopped by two police cars at Balsham after a chase. They claimed they had been asked to take a parcel to a house in Fordham but had lost the address. They drove up and down a number of times but could not stop because the car had no lights, having been involved in an accident on the way. But the judge said they had been embarking on a safe blowing expedition 59 04 04 a & b

1961 09 29

Geoffrey Dixon-Box thought the old army surplus bungalow he was improving at Balsham needed something extra. So he decided to build a 25ft tower next to the front door using materials at least

1,700 years old. Some stones came from the old Roman Wall around London, others from demolished abbeys and the cliffs at Hunstanton. It took almost four years to put up, working entirely by himself, and now it is complete he can stand on the beaten copper roof and look over the battlements. 61 09 29a

1964 09 23

Balsham's Susan Plum coaching inn, formerly Fox & Hounds, to be sold – 64 09 23

1966 04 07

Impey new housing developments at Bartlow Road Linton, Lt Eversden & Balsham – colour advert – 66 04 07a

1977 01 11

Molly Dancing, a special Cambridgeshire Plough Monday celebration which died out in the 1930s, has made a comeback at Balsham. The Cambridge Morris Men revived the custom as part of the ritual of taking an oak plough round the village. About £1,000 has been raised for charity since Plough Monday was revived seven years ago but for once the "Ploughmen" in breeches and waistcoats, jocularly threatening to carve up lawns unless given money, were upstaged by the enterprise of the Morris Men. Mr Russell Wortley said the costumes were as authentic and possible and the tunes were recorded from an elderly Morris dancer at Comberton who died many years ago. It was the first time they had been danced since the tradition died out at Little Downham in 1936.

1977 03 16

Residents in some of South Cambridgeshire's small villages which do not yet have main sewerage, could still be stuck with their cesspools and septic tanks in the year 2,000. Among schemes which do not now appear in Anglian Water Authority's programme are the Balsham & Teversham treatment works extensions and the Sawston Deal Farm pumping station. This means West Wrating and Weston Colville cannot go on to main sewerage and new housing at Sawston is in jeopardy.

1982 12 20

Balsham alone maintains Plough Monday tradition – 81 12 30a

1982 11 08

Zena opens her kitchen – of Black Bull, Balsham – 82 11 08a

1983 02 15

Children and neighbours formed a human chain to save valuable antiques and silverware as fire swept through a 16th century manor house at Balsham. Virtually the whole roof collapsed as the fire raged through the upper part of the building which is one of the largest and best-known houses in the village, standing in its own extensive grounds. The owners had just finished eight years work in redecoration 83 02 15a

1984 01 10

To the sound of bells, drums, accordion and the heavy clump of clogs more than 40 musicians from St Neots, Whittlesey, Downham Market and Stevenage brought Plough Monday to life in Fenstanton. Dances featured milk maids and ploughboys and songs were about good old ale and hearty dishes of parsnips. And if anybody noticed the modern paraphernalia of cars, flash guns and the searchlights of a television camera crew they were too polite to mention it. Dancing also took place at Balsham where they took a plough into each of the village's three inns 84 01 10 p11

1985 06 20

Balsham was virtually cut off as a freak midsummer storm brought traffic chaos and flooding. Water poured into village homes and roads became impassable as rain lashed down. A team of 20 firemen worked for nine hours pumping out homes in the High Street. One house in Fulbourn Road began to subside and firemen knocked a hole in the wall of a well to drain away some of the water 85 06 20

1987 03 19

A £150,000 restoration project at the 700-year-old Balsham Church is nearly finished. Work has concentrated on the ancient tower which was unsafe as buttresses were crumbling. In one of the last jobs before the scaffolding is dismantled workmen Tony Stacey and Alan Larhan laid a commemorative stone. Still to be done are window repairs and the installation of bells. The Rector said that English Heritage had been very generous in giving a grant, but the church still had to raise around £15,000. 87 03 19a

1988 01 13

Plough Monday celebrations were held at Balsham, Fenstanton and Elsworth where the Cromwell Molly dancers from Great Gransden led a procession of villagers to both pubs, The Poacher and the George and Dragon. They also stopped at a beamed cottage, formerly the Plough pub where, after rolling back the carpet, the dancers sang and jigged to traditional tunes wearing hobnailed boots and decorated clothes. One of the men dressed as a milkmaid – but kept his boots on. At Fenstanton the dancers followed the historical ritual of blacking their faces and donning country costumes before a torch-lit procession from the church to the Chequers, George Inn and the Tudor Hotel. 88 01 13a

1988 09 21

Balsham bells will soon ring out for the first time in more than 30 years. The five ancient bells which date back to 1540 were dismantled from the tower by soldiers last November and sent to a London foundry to be restored. A sixth bell has been cast to complete the set and dedicated to the memory of John Houghton and Thomas Sutton who were associated with the Charterhouse Foundation of London which is patron of the living. And among the congregation for the inauguration ceremony will be 102-year-old former sexton William Jolley. 88 09 21a

1989 01 10

Villagers in Balsham celebrated Plough Monday, a tradition dating back 200 years when villages pulled the plough around the village collecting money from 'well-to-do' families. If anyone refused to give, they would draw a furrow across their lawn. At Fenstanton the Old Hunts Molly Dancers led a procession with over 200 villagers, maintaining a tradition revived about 10 years ago. 89 01 10a

1989 04 04

The clock at West Wickham church has been removed for an overhaul. It has an unusual lozenge-shaped clock face and is at least 200 years old. It was installed in September 1954 after being brought from St Peter's church, Duxford, where it had been since 1791. Now the clock, originally made by John Warner of Fleet Street, will be overhauled by Peter Watt of Balsham and provided with electrical winding. 89 04 04